

USDA/Rural Development

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20250 - 0705

NEWS RELEASE

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VENEMAN ANNOUNCES \$20 MILLION IN BROADBAND TECHNOLOGY GRANTS

Three Entities in Washington State Receive Funding

WASHINGTON, May 16, 2003 - Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman today announced the selection of the first broadband community grants to be awarded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The grants total \$20 million with over \$8.2 million benefiting 13 Native American and Native Alaskan communities. Through these grants, the communities will be able to participate and take advantage of the high-speed telecommunications tools needed to be a part of the global digital community.

“Expanding the reach of information technology brings to the homes and businesses of America’s most remote rural communities new opportunities for accessing education, health and economic resources,” said Veneman. “Placing the vast knowledge and resources at the fingertips of a great number of Americans will bring anew a world of information and opportunities.”

At the Economic Summit held last year in Waco, Texas, President Bush stated, “In order to make sure the economy grows, we must bring the promise of broadband technology to millions of Americans...And broadband technology is going to be incredibly important for us to stay on the cutting edge of innovation here in America.”

This investment in rural America goes to [40 communities in 17 states \(Link to list\)](#) and supports the Bush Administration’s efforts to enable all sectors of the economy to grow. The 40 applications selected were among over 300 to submit requests. Communities selected do not have access to broadband connectivity for essential services of police, fire protection, hospitals, libraries and schools. In return for receiving a grant, the communities will provide community residents with computer and Internet access. The grant program supplements USDA Rural Development’s standard high-speed telecommunications loan program.

In Washington State, a grant to Hood Canal Telephone Company, Inc., will provide a Hybrid Fiber Coax network to the Squaxin Island Tribe giving residents access to broadband, cable television and telephone services. The availability of broadband will allow a learning center to be established at the Tribal Center, including computers and associated equipment. The ability to access vital health information through the use of these services will enhance the quality of care and life for the residents. In addition, law enforcement’s capability of obtaining vital information would result in better serving and protecting the community.

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A grant to the Port Gamble S’Klallam Tribe will be used to develop a community-oriented connectivity network on the Reservation. A newly built fiber optic network will be extended to the Tribe’s Community Center and governmental campus allowing broadband connections to serve several key Tribal facilities and organizations, including: the Little Boston Library; the Education Center; the S’Klallam Housing Authority; the Port Gamble Development Authority; the Health Services Center; the Northwest Indian College/Evergreen State College higher education programs on the Reservation; and the Community Center, which is the primary government headquarters.

Jackie J. Gleason, Washington State Director of USDA Rural Development was very pleased to learn of the funding awards, which will serve two Native American communities in western Washington. “We congratulate the Port Gamble S’Klallam Tribe and Hood Canal Telephone Company in their efforts to make broadband access a reality for the residents of these rural areas. The services provided by this funding will improve the quality of life for the tribal residents, as well as economic opportunities for the Tribes in the future. ”

Sawtooth Technologies, LLC, a company from Stevenson is also a Washington State grant recipient. The company will utilize the funding to install a wireless backbone from the Slatt NoaNet fiber optic point-of-presence near Arlington, Oregon to the Moro Grain Elevators. The 18-mile stretch of fiber will provide broadband access for primary public services and the residents of Moro, Oregon.

USDA Rural Development's mission is to deliver programs in a way that will support increasing economic opportunity and improve the quality of life of rural residents. Rural Development is Rural America's Venture Capitalist. Providing equity, liquidity, and technical assistance to finance and foster growth in homeownership, business development, and critical community and technology infrastructure. Further information on these and other rural programs is available at a local USDA Rural Development office or by visiting USDA's web site at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/>.

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